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University of Montana

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MEDIA RELEASE

December 15, 1987

UM JOURNALISM SCHOOL GETS GRANT FOR NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS

MISSOULA --

With \$8,000 from the Greater Montana Foundation, two University of Montana journalism professors have launched a program to aid Native American students seeking careers in journalism or broadcasting.

"We think it's an important field where they can make an enormous contribution," said Joseph Durso Jr., one of the grant's directors and the chairman of UM's radio-television department. Durso's co-director is Charles Hood, dean of the journalism school.

The program aims to attract Native American students into journalism and to support and encourage them while they work on a degree, Durso said.

The one-year grant, which began in September, will be used to provide financial aid, fund a summer internship at a Montana radio or television station and pay for a writing coach.

The writing coach, Deborah Richie, said "the program shows students that the school cares and wants them to get through the program." Native American students, who are often intimidated by the intense writing requirements in journalism, may be encouraged "if they know there is this help."

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Richie began her duties as the writing coach midway through fall quarter.

"I'm just getting a feel for what can be done," she said.

She mostly works one-on-one with the students, dealing with problems they're having not only in their journalism classes but in any classes with writing assignments.

Richie also meets for an hour each week with the students as a group in which they discuss their writing problems and express concerns about press coverage of the Native American viewpoint.

"It's very upsetting to them to see misrepresentation in the news," Richie said. "The students in the program are very enthusiastic about journalism and are aware of the need for the Native American viewpoint in the news."

Lori Ann Edmo, a senior in journalism from Fort Hall, Idaho, said, "I think [Richie's] really helped a lot, especially in writing and reporting."

Native American students have always had problems with grammar and style, Edmo said. But she also pointed out a cultural difference that's been a stumbling block for these students.

"The way we're raised is different than we're taught in journalism. In journalism you're expected to go right in and ask people questions without knowing them [the people]. We're raised to respect people's privacy."

Durso said that while the grant runs just until September

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1988, he and Hood will apply again, not only to the Greater Montana Foundation but elsewhere as well.

"We'd like to keep it going forever, if we could," he said.

The Greater Montana Foundation, a private organization, funds projects to improve broadcasting in Montana.

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